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ABSTRACT

The school self-study process for participants who had been through it before was compared with the process in schools new to self-study using the "K-12 School Evaluative Criteria" (1983). Self-studies had been completed by pilot schools in the 1981-82 school year. Personnel from 11 schools with a previous self-study and 123 participants with no previous experience answered questionnaires about the instrument and were compared using t-tests for their opinions of: (1) adaptability; (2) clarity; (3) effectiveness in determining the degree of articulation; (4) grammatical structure; and (5) terminology. No significant differences existed between experienced and inexperienced participants' ratings. Both novice and experienced participants also considered that a kindergarten through grade 12 stelf-study was more beneficial than a specific level study. Previous experience did not apparently improve the school's ability to cope with the process, although those with previous experience did begin making curricular changes more rapidly. Statistical data are summarized in tables. (SLD)

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The Second Time Around: Are Self-Studies Easier and Do They Have More Impact if School's Personnel Have Been Through the Process Before?

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The Second Time Around: Are Self-Studies Easier and Do They Have More Impact if School's Personnel Have Been Through the Process Before?

Evaluation has become a word of major importance on today's educational scene. With accountability no longer considered educational jargon but rather an essential word in one's vocabulary, the public is demanding to see evidence of well planned, implemented, and evaluated curriculum designs. Likewise, as the public tends to be skeptical of the ability of some teachers, school systems are beginning to systematically review their strengths and weaknesses with the public's help in order to improve the perceptions of education that the general populace now holds. The Evaluation of Secondary School's (General Report) (Cooperative Study of Secondary School Standards, 1939, p. 366) said, "By what means and processes does a good school develop into a better one?" The answer given is "through diagnosis of its weaker points, and stimulation to improvement, followed by appropriate action in line with such diagnosis." In other words, by evaluation! The traditional view of evaluation has been a process which enables data to be gathered, analyzed, and synthesized in order to enable decision making (Borich & Jamelka, 1981). Cronbach, Ambron, Dornbusch, Hess, Hornik, Phillips, Walker, and Weiner (1980) defined evaluation as a "systematic examination of events occurring in and consequent on a contemporary program--an examination conducted to assist in improving this program and other programs having the same general purpose" (p. 14). Cronbach et al. claimed that the field of

evaluation has "become the liveliest frontier of American social science" (p. 13).

When speaking of evaluation, Eisner (1979) has found that two central functions exist: 1) to make revisions in the curriculum, and 2) to identify and anticipate educational needs. He has condoned the notion that unless the quality of the components of the curriculum are appraised, there is no conceivable means to determine its worth. He, too, has promoted the appropriateness of the curriculum for the intended population.

Saylor, Alexander, and Lewis (1981) avowed that the basic goal of evaluation is the ability to determine the worth or value of something. More specifically, 1) to determine if the curriculum meets the intended purposes, 2) if those purposes are valid, 3) if the curriculum is appropriate for the clientele it serves, and 4) if so, are the instructional models, the content, and the instructional materials that are selected parallel with the purposes?

Trump and Georgiades (1975) have specified the major aim of evaluation is the ability to determine how a given educational program is better than it was previously and how more improvements may take place in the future. For this reason any evaluation must strive to collect comprehensive data regarding all aspects of the school.

But what data are needed and how are the data collected at school? For the most part, schools' personnel complete self study materials. The Cooperative Study of Secondary School Standards, now called the National Study of School Evaluation, began developing such self study

materials for secondary school evaluations back in 1933. Over the years, middle/junior high schools and elementary schools have been provided with evaluation instruments, as well. But, until recently, the unit schools, which house grades K-12, had no such mechanism to systematically view the total school program. So in 1980, the Executive Director of the National Study of School Evaluation, Dr. Donald C. Manlove, made a proposal regarding the feasibility of an evaluation instrument that would answer requests made for a K-12 evaluation tool. The Board of Directors, deciding there was a void where this specific type of evaluation was concerned, directed Dr. Manlove to start the developmental process for an instrument to meet the needs of K-12 unit schools. Having had much experience in other developmental projects, the Executive Director was able to begin the effort expeditiously.

A National Advisory Committee was selected. It was composed of members from all regional accrediting associations; these educators had expertise in the areas that would be covered in the K-12 instrument. Several people had in-depth curriculum backgrounds and all members had classroom and/or administrative experience in elementary, middle and/or high schools. Committee members represented public, private and independent schools. The diversity of the group enabled the team to serve the K-12 schools in a professional and accurate manner.

The National Advisory Committee first met in St. Louis, Missouri, in January of 1981. At this time the materials for the new instrument

were assembled. While this committee was requested to draw heavily upon other NSSE materials, the team was also asked to include only items specifically apropos to a K-12 situation. Naturally, any new concepts had to be addressed and therefore, many new items had to be created for such an instrument.

The regional accrediting associations were notified of the NSSE's developmental effort and asked to submit names of K-12 schools that would be involved in self studies for the 1981-82 school year. From this compilation, twelve schools were selected and invited to participate; this enabled these schools to undergo self studies on a complete K-12 scale, using only one instrument. In the summer of 1981 this writer became involved with the project in the capacity of the Research Assistant.

During the 1981-1982 school year, the pilot schools were involved in their self studies. As they were engaged in their subcommittee meetings, they critiqued the instrument by writing their comments on one copy of the proposed K-12 School Evaluative Criteria. Upon (or near) completion of the self study, the participants were asked to complete a questionnaire.

But as the self studies were taking place numerous questions were arrising from the schools' personnel. It became of interest to see how the perceptions of the self study participants who had been through the process before compared with the participants who were new to the process. Since, at the time of this study, an instrument had not yet been available which examined the total school program, many K-12

schools that had desired to undergo a self study had not gotten involved since technically they would have had to use three separate instruments for the various organizational divisions (i.e. elementary, middle, high school). This would have broken the continuity desired in K-12 schools.

Now, schools never before involved in self studies are using the new K-12 School Evaluative Criteria (1983). Of course, schools that had taken part in previous self studies are also using the new document. A difference existed, however, between previous self studies in which the schools had participated and the pilot test of this instrument: the teachers had only participated in self studies with members from similar backgrounds (elementary, middle, or high school). For this reason, it became a concern of the project director and this researcher if using this type of self study instrument would create more problems for the faculties with previous self study experience or those without such experience.

One of the twelve pilot schools was unable to complete its self study so this study represents a 264 (70%) return of the annonymous questionnaires from personnel from eleven schools: Of these, 141 participants had previous self study experience and 123 had no previous experience. The statistics for four questionnaire items were placed into their appropriate categories determined by whether or not the faculties at the schools had participated in self studies before. These two groups were compared using frequencies and percentages on three items and using t-tests on their ratings of five characteristics

of the instrument.

The first question examined was an item dealing with the participants' rating of the instrument. The areas under examination were: 1) adaptability; 2) clarity, 3) effectiveness in determining the degree of articulation, 4) grammatical structure, and 5) terminology. For the purposes of calculating, the ratings were assigned numerical values. In this case, Excellent=4, Good=3, Fair=2, and Poor=1. Those choosing to make no comment were not calculated in this 5-part item. The means and variances were found for the experienced and inexperienced participants in all five areas. They were then compared using t-tests. The formula used to calculate the t-tests was

$$\frac{\bar{X}old - \bar{X}new}{\sqrt{\frac{(Nold-1) \cdot \tilde{\sigma}old + (Nnew-1) \cdot \tilde{\sigma}new}{Nold + Nnew - 2} \cdot \frac{Nold + Nnew}{Nold \cdot Nnew}}}$$

The results may be seen in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 here

In all five areas t=<.05. Therefore, the results indicate that no significant difference existed between the experienced and the inexperienced participants' ratings of these five areas.

These data indicate that the participants shared similar sentiments regarding the instrument. Therefore, having experience with other self studies, normally using other NSSE instruments, did not cause the participants to view the process in a different manner than neophyte participants. While one might wonder why experienced participants would not have given the instrument higher ratings, especially in the areas of adaptability and clarity, the additional

difficulty of coping with many other grade levels in this self study may have created the lack of discrepancy.

It would appear from these data that K-12 schools that never before have used self study materials need not fear plunging into this new instrument. These data statistically show that faculties with self study experience and faculties without such experience perceived the instrument in much the same manner.

Next, a questionnaire item regarding the benefit of a K-12 self study over a specific level self study was compared. The categorized results appear in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 here

The results indicated that both the novice participants and the experienced participants found a K-12 self study was of greater benefit than a specific level self study would have been. As the discrepancy between the two groups was examined, it became apparent that both Yes and No responses received almost identical percentages. In fact, the results indicated a mere discrepancy of one percentage point.

To delve further to see if a discrepancy existed between faculties with self study experience and faculties without previous self study experience, the participants' responses to a question regarding the resultant continuity in the curriculum were compared. The results are tabulated in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 here

Eighty-six (61%) of those responding from the schools with

experienced participants said that curricular changes had taken place at or near the completion of the self study with 60 (49%) saying this from neophyte schools. It appears that the schools having had previous experience with self studies tended to begin making curricular changes more rapidly. It is interesting to note that a total of 19 (13%) of the respondents from the experienced schools withheld judgment while 28 (22%) withheld judgment from the newly participating schools. A bit of skepticism may be noted here on the part of the neophytes but no significant problem is apparent.

A fourth item on which the groups were compared was the adequacy of the proposed instrument. Table 4 represents the tabulated results.

Insert Table 4 here

Both groups responded to this item in similar fashions. While the experienced group seems slightly more positive, all results had a discrepancy of five percentage points or less. Again, the neophyte faculties had a greater percent of people choosing not to comment.

Despite the fact that certain facets of the instrument needed improvement, overall, the instrument, and the K-12 philosophy behind the instrument, appeared to be sound since both groups were in close agreement on all items; all of these compared questions indicated there was no significant difference in the responses of the participants from these two groups. Again, this lack of a significant discrepancy indicated that the teachers from schools never before undertaking a self study were able to cope with a self study with no more difficulty

than teachers from any other schools. These data support the notion that each self study was a totally new experience. Again, it should be noted that those faculties which had previous experience had never before used the exact instrument. In addition, numerous new people sat on the subcommittees since each subcommittee had to represent the entire K-12 spectrum. Such changes may have had an effect on the lack of significant discrepancies since even the experienced participants were fording into some previously unexplored areas.

The data were analyzed and presented to the National Advisory Committee; the instrument was then refined and a glossary of terms was added to clarify terminology. The instrument was published in 1983 and has been used by numerous K-12 schools.

In a few years, after several schools have used the K-12 School Evaluative Criteria and those schools are ready to undergo re-evaluation, it would be interesting to duplicate this study. In the duplication study, however, the experienced participants should be those who have used the exact instrument on a K-12 bases.

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Table 1

Ratings of the Instrument

	Experienced		Unexperienced		
	Mean	Variance	Mean	Variance	T-test
Adaptability to Your Particular School	2.784	.419	2.692	.275	1.216
Clarity	2.330	.566	2.172	.415	1.769
Effectiveness in Determining Degree of Articulation	2.527	.792	2.533	.572	-.0529692
Grammatical Structure	2.837	.779	2.774	.334	.655
Terminology	2.451	.471	2.355	.489	1.092

Table 2

Is Having a K-12 Self Study Rather Than a Specific Level Self Study More Beneficial to the School District?

Response	Schools with Previous Self Study Experience		Schools with No Self Study Experience	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	103	73	89	72
No	30	21	25	20
Undecided	5	4	8	7
No Comment	3	2	1	1
Total	141	100	123	100

Table 3

Does the School Curriculum Have More Continuity as a Result of the K-12 Self Study?

Response	Schools with Previous Self Study Experience		Schools with No Self Study Experience	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	86	61	60	49
No	36	26	35	29
Undecided	10	7	14	11
No Comment	9	6	14	11
Total	141	100	123	100

Table 4

Is the Proposed Instrument K-12 Evaluative Criteria Adequate for Evaluating Quality Education in K-12 Schools?

Response	Schools with Previous Self Study Experience		Schools with No Self Study Experience	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	49	35	38	31
No	6	4	9	7
Yes, with Revision	74	52	58	47
Undecided	0	0	1	1
No Comment	12	9	17	14
Total	141	100	123	100